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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran Human Rights Report
Transatlantic Relations
PARIS - Friday, March 10, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran
Human Rights Report
Transatlantic Relations

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The announcement that Abu Ghraib "which had become a symbol of embarrassment" would close was picked up by French television last evening, carrying once again the controversial photos of detainee abuse. Alain de Chalvron on France 2 television concluded his commentary with the following: "The detainees will be transferred to a new prison, where this time, there will be no cameras allowed." Liberation this morning carries the information as reported by dispatches.

Deputy Secretary Zoellick's visit to Paris in connection with the Sudan Consortium is reported in Le Figaro: "Since the beginning of the week, the U.S. and the EU have launched a diplomatic campaign for the transfer of the peacekeeping mission in the region from the African Union to the UN. 'The crisis persists in Darfur. The cease-fire has been ended. There is no time to waste,' said Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick.

Catholic La Croix devotes a commentary on Iran, concluding that the "beautiful cooperation between the U.S. and the EU-3 may end soon." (See Part C) UN Reform and the publication of the Human Rights Report make up the rest of today's international news. (See Part C)

Social and political issues continue to be today's lead and editorial stories. Le Figaro interviews Princeton University Professor Ezra Suleiman on French society, the CPE and social reforms. He calls France "a nation of spontaneous anti-liberalism." "In France, precariousness is a concept defined in comparison to the job security of civil servants. France likes to demonize; it is an instinctive reaction. Hence this spontaneous anti-liberalism of France's youth. The word liberal has almost become an insult. If France is so reluctant to accept reforms, it is because all previous government reforms, on the right and the left, have gone against the changes required by globalization. The law on the 35-hour workweek is a case in point. To the right, the solutions colored by social-radicalism a la Chirac are not a serious counterweight to the left's anti-liberalism. France is freezing itself into an obsolete social model. The situation is becoming critical. But France is resilient, and I refuse to be pessimistic."

Philippe Gelie in Le Figaro analyzes the consequences of Larry Summers' "forced" resignation as Harvard President, because of his "politically incorrect" stance on women in science and his desire to develop fundamental sciences to the detriment of the humanities. "By attacking the bastion of the humanities, Summers has found his match." The tempest, according to Gelie, has unleashed an inside war among Democrats, "where this battle is being fought" illustrating the disarray of the opposition in the U.S., which is divided over Iraq, immigration and economic policies. "With the mid-term elections looming, the Democrats are like Harvard, without a leader or a program."

Le Monde carries an op-ed on transatlantic relations, based on Ambassador Schnobel's book "Europe-U.S.: A Common Future." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran

"Iran, a Break in the Making"

Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (03/10): "For any nation, being brought before the UNSC is always a moral and diplomatic defeat. This is why it can be said that Iran has just registered a failure. This defeat for Iran is a victory

for the U.S. . Now that the issue has been brought before the UNSC, the U.S. has every intention of taking over. For the past three years, Washington left the EU-3 in charge. Despite Russia's moderating intervention, the crisis could not be resolved. Now the UNSC will move into a phase of gradual and increased pressure on Tehran, using the threat of sanctions. But this is also the phase when the Bush administration will prove how well it can maneuver. Neither China nor Russia will be in favor of sanctions. And so the consensus that has prevailed for the past three years at the IAEA thanks to the EU-3 diplomatic efforts may not survive. Although Europeans and Americans share the same views on the nuclear issue, they do not see eye to eye on the long-term strategy to use with Iran. While the Americans characterize Iran's regime as irresponsible and are seeking to topple it, the Europeans hope to be able to continue living and doing business with Iran, and worry about a strategy of the worse. This is why on either side of the Atlantic, everyone is convinced that the beautiful cooperation of late is coming to an end."

Human Rights Report

"The U.S. Points a Finger at Abuse in Arab Nations"

Corine Lesnes in left-of-center Le Monde (03/10):

"Washington's Human Rights Report can be summarized as a compilation of the contradictions plaguing America's new foreign policy in promoting democracy. Three of the countries visited recently by Secretary Rice are targeted, . Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. According to Amnesty International, the countries fingered are the same countries where the U.S. occasionally sends prisoners in the framework of the 'renditions.' In the chapter devoted to France, 'French democracy' does not come out unscathed. The report points to French military personnel indicted for its actions in Cote d'Ivoire and denounces police brutality, racism and anti-Semitism. The report does not spare President Chirac, recalling that he is under scrutiny for corruption for the period when he was Mayor of Paris."

Transatlantic Relations

"A Reconciliation of Circumstance"

Thomas Ferenzi in left-of-center Le Monde (03/10): "Having read former Ambassador Rockwell Schnabel's book based on his EU experience and entitled 'Europe-U.S.: A Common Future,' and despite the tribute paid to European integration, one comes away with the impression that incomprehension remains. Ambassador Schnabel is particularly worried about Europe's attempts to 'balance' the transatlantic relationship. He feels that it is unacceptable for Europe to aim to be a 'counterweight.' One might have thought that after President Bush's visit to Brussels, and calls for appeasement, Ambassador Schnabel might have tried to understand Europe's motivations. But no, he sticks to his guns and condemns the proposal for a European headquarter distinct from NATO's. In short, while relations between Europe and the U.S. appear to have improved, it is clear that deep down differences remain. According to Ambassador Schnabel the Americans refute the French stance of 'multipolarity.' It is therefore difficult to imagine how transatlantic relations might warm up. Knee-jerk reactions are back. The U.S. insists on NATO's primary role, while Europe wants primarily to avoid a crisis with the U.S. And so today's calm is more of a truce of circumstance than a common vision." STAPLETON